Moderator Package

Parent Focus Groups

This document is intended to assist AISI teams in facilitating parent focus groups on our 3 themes: Student Engagement, Assessment Practices, and Technology integration. Additional school-specific questions may be added.

2010

AISI

Chinook's Edge School Division #73

2/19/2010

**Parent Focus Group**

**Moderator Guide**

1. **INTRODUCTION: (3 min)**

Purpose: The moderator greets the participants and explains the objectives of focus group and reviews the rules.

Instructions:

Hello. I am the moderator for this AISI discussion and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be our note taker. My job is to move the conversation along and make sure that we cover our questions and to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be involved. Our purpose today is to find out what you, as parents, think about student engagement, student assessment, and technology. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. The purpose is to find out what your personal opinions are, and everyone’s opinion is equally important to us. **We will try to keep our conversation within a one hour time limit.**

Before we get started, here are some ground rules and points of information: [may want to post this and refer to it]

1. Please talk one at a time.
2. Avoid side conversations with neighbors
3. We need to hear from everyone in the course of the discussion, but you don’t have to answer every question.
4. Feel free to respond directly to someone who has made a point. You don’t have to address your comments to me.
5. Say what is true for you.
6. **We do not use names of students, teachers or parents in discussions.**
7. Respect for opinions: You may find that you disagree with an opinion voiced here by another person. That is OK, and I hope you will say so when that happens in a respectful and polite way. You also may change your mind in the middle of our discussion, perhaps as a result of something that someone else says, and again I hope you will say so, if and when that happens.
8. Don’t hesitate to stop us as we are writing if what we have written does not accurately reflect your comments.
9. This discussion is completely anonymous and confidential. There will be no record of what you say with your name on it. We are not going to quote anyone specifically using her/his name. ***You were all randomly selected to participate in this session, and we appreciate that you have taken time out of your lives to come today.***

Directly quoted from : Abt Associates. (2004). *Principal focus group questions: Moderator guide.* Retrieved February 3, 2010, from <http://www.abt.sliidea.org/dci/principals%20guide.pdf>

1. **Have group introduce themselves** with one interesting fact about themselves (how long they have lived in the community, how many children, favorite memory about school…)
2. **Focus Group Questions (see Logistics section below for more detailed information)**
3. *You were all selected to join this discussion group based on the fact that you are parents within our school.*
   1. **Assessment Practices (20 min)**
      1. How do you know what is expected of your child in relation to his or her learning?
      2. How do you know how well your child is doing and what needs to be done to improve his or her learning?
   2. **Student Engagement (20 min)**
      1. What engages your child at school [in relation to their learning]? [e.g. gets them excited, interested, enthusiastic]
      2. What can we further do as a school to increase student engagement in their learning?
   3. **Technology (20 min)**
      1. How does your child use technology to enhance their learning in school? [enhance – make learning more meaningful, relevant, interesting]
      2. What concerns do you have about your child using technology in the classroom and how can the school address these concerns?
4. **\*\*if you notice if, at any time, participants appear to be tired, take a break!**
5. **Wrap-Up (2 min)**
   1. We’ve covered a lot of ground in our time together. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about in relation to our 3 topics?
   2. If agreed to in advance, confirm when and how participants will receive a summary of the focus group findings. [note: this can be emailed to them for additional comments, this does not mean that you will change your findings]
   3. Thank you
   4. May also want to write thank you notes/cards (depending on group)

**Logistics: Parent Focus Groups**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Think About:** | **Notes to Self:** |
| 1. Selection of parents:    1. Parent council?    2. Random selection? |  |
| 1. When is the most appropriate time for parents to come in?    1. During parent-teacher-student interviews?    2. During parent council meetings?    3. Other? |  |
| 1. Will you provide    1. Snacks?    2. Supper?    3. Babysitting? |  |
| 1. How might these questions be asked?    1. Focus group format    2. Interview format    3. Other    4. **\*\*Do you want to send the questions out ahead of time?** |  |
| 1. How will you recruit parents?    1. Formal letter of invitation    2. Have each parent bring or talk to 3 other parents    3. Other |  |
| 1. How will you thank the parents?    1. Thank you cards    2. Tim Hortons coupons?    3. Other |  |

**Logistics Continued:**

Ideal group size is up to 12 people.

***Up to 12 people:***

1. Sit at tables so participants can see each other (ideally).
2. Several options exist, depending on your comfort level with the group:
   1. **Option A – Large group discussion with note taking**
      1. Work as a large group with one facilitator and one note taker.
      2. Work through the 3 sets of questions as a large group discussion
      3. Note taker should record on chart paper or SMART board or on laptop that is attached to a projector. Notes need to be seen by the group.
   2. **Option B – Post-it-Note Format** 
      1. Facilitator:
         1. Question 1:
            1. Have participants write down ideas to questions on post-it-notes first. One idea per post-it-note related to the topic.
            2. Each member talks by putting post-it-note in the centre of the table, going around the groups so everyone has a voice. Continue until all post it notes are exhausted.



* + - * 1. Note taker is recording ideas on chart paper as discussion continues. Note taker may start to notice themes and can record or make headings according to themes on chart paper/SMART board/computer with projector
        2. At the end of the first question, facilitators or note taker should review notes on chart paper, ask if there are any additions.
      1. Question 2: Repeat process
  1. **Option C – Personal Record Sheets and Chart paper**
     1. Question 1:
        + 1. Facilitator asks participants to write down initial thoughts on the first topic on a sheet of paper provided to each participant. ***These sheets can be collected by the table facilitator once the conversation has been exhausted.***



* + - * 1. Each member takes a turn sharing ideas from their sheet going around the group so everyone has a voice. Continue until all ideas are exhausted. Participants may continue to write down ideas on their individual sheets.
        2. Table facilitator either takes notes on chart paper or assigns one of the group members to take notes. Note taker should record on chart paper or on laptop that is attached to a projector. Notes need to be seen by the group.
        3. Facilitator will need to make sure there is participation from all members.
        4. Upon completion of the first question, go over what has been written, ask if there is anything else that they would like to add.
    1. Go on to second question and repeat process.
  1. **Mix these strategies up** as you work through your way through the sets of questions.

1. You may choose to use a tape recorder. Analyzing data from the tape recorder requires you to either analyze the data as you re-listen to the tape OR have the tape transcribed. If you need help with transcriptions, Olds College has an office assistant program that will transcribe your data for a donation to their program. [contact Carmel Maloney at 403-556-4648 or email her at cmaloney@olds college.ca]. **If you choose to use a tape recorder, you should still have someone actively taking notes.**

**Materials:**



* Snacks
* Post-it-notes
* Pencils/pens
* Individual participant sheets with focus group questions
* Chart paper
* Markers
* Nametags
* SMART Board or laptop and projector(s) for recording answers– may want to use for small groups

**Tips on Managing the focus Group Session**

* + - 1. Once you present a question to the group, it is important to step back and allow the discussion to progress with only a minimal amount of interruption on your part.
      2. Do not steer the conversation to answers you want to hear ☺
      3. Allow periods of silence. Silence is uncomfortable…but silence is also golden…
      4. Avoid asking questions that seem to suggest a correct answer.
      5. Try not to let strong personalities dominate the discussion.
      6. Encourage input by those who are less inclined to speak out on the questions being discussed.
      7. Make every effort to practice good listening skills.

Directly quoted from: Israel, G., & Galindo-Gonzalez, S. (2008). *Using focus group interviews for planning or evaluating extension programs.* University of Florida.Retrieved February 19, 2010, from <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/PD/PD03600.pdf>



**Analyzing Focus Group Data**

* Analysis is used to indentify overarching themes related to the questions that were discussed and the range of perspectives expressed by the participants.
* Common considerations in analyzing focus group data are:
  + Words: identify commonly used words; cluster similar concepts together; arrange responses on a continuum or in categories.
  + Patterns: Do participants change or reverse statement after hearing from each other? What comments were offered by more than one participant? What themes were supported or rejected by more than one participant? What issues or questions were especially easy or difficult for the group to resolve?
  + Specificity of Responses: Give more weight to responses that are specific and based on experiences than those that are vague and impersonal. Give more weight to responses in the first person rather than hypothetical third person.
* Use a several colored highlighters or markers to color code themes in the data.
* Directly quoted from: Tobacco Control Evaluation Center. (n.d.). *Tips & tools #4: Focus Group Interviews*.Retrieved February 19, 2010, from <http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/5715/27616.pdf>

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**Reporting Focus Group Data**

* Information about the number of people who participated in the focus group and the number of focus groups conducted should be included.
* Key themes in the data should be presented in relation to our 3 themes:
  + Student assessment
  + Student engagement
  + Technology use
* Direct quotes can be used to illustrate the major ideas or perspectives that were identified in the focus group analysis.
* It is usually not appropriate to report the information in terms of the percentage of participants who gave one answer or another. The purpose of the focus group is to understand the range of perspectives on the topic of interest.
* Source: Tobacco Control Evaluation Center. (n.d.). *Tips & tools #4: Focus Group Interviews*.Retrieved February 19, 2010, from http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/5715/27616.pdf

**References:**

Abt Associates. (2004). *Principal focus group questions: Moderator guide.* Retrieved February 3, 2010, from <http://www.abt.sliidea.org/dci/principals%20guide.pdf>

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FGD. (2009). Focus group moderator’s guide: national survey of parents in SEE Countries. Retrieved February 3, 2010, from <http://www.google.com/search?q=teacher+focus+group+moderator+guide&rls=com.microsoft:en-us&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&startIndex=&startPage=1&rlz=1I7SKPB_en>

Krueger, R. (n.d.). *Focus group interviewing.* Retrieved February 2, 2010, from <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/focus.html>

Lee, T. (1999). *Using qualitative methods in organizational research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Appendix A**

**Sample Letter of Invitation**

Name/Title (if applicable)

School (if applicable)

Mailing Address

City/Prov/Postal Code

Dear ( ):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ school would like to tap into your experience and expertise as a parent in our school. We holding a focus group and would appreciate your participation.

The goals of the focus group are to:

1. Identify strengths and gaps in relation to:

* Student engagement,
* Student assessment, and
* Technology
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We would like to invite you to attend a focus group of parents on: (*day*), (*date*) from (*start time*) to (*End time*); at (*location and address*).

The one-hour focus group will include 12 participants, and will be co-facilitated by (*names*), who are helping guide our work in these areas. No participants will be publicly identified in our final report.

A light supper will be provided at (*one hour before focus group starts*). If you have any specific needs related to your participation, please let me know so we can accommodate them.

You can call (*contact*) at (*area code/telephone number*) to confirm your participation, or to request additional information. We appreciate your consideration of our request, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

**Appendix B**

**Sample Focus Group form for participants**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theme 1: Student Assessment** |  |
| How do you know what is expected of your child in relation to his or her learning |  |
| How do you know how well your child is doing and what needs to be done to improve his or her learning? |  |
| **Theme 2: Student Engagement** |  |
| What engages your child at school [in terms of their learning]? |  |
| What can we further do as a school to increase student engagement in their learning? |  |
| **Theme 3: Technology Use** |  |
| How does your child use technology to enhance his or her learning in school? |  |
| What concerns do you have about your child using technology in the classroom and how can the school address these concerns? |  |

**Appendix C**

**Notes for Focus Group Moderator AFTER Focus Group**

**Parents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **What worked?** | **What should we change for next time?** |
| **Initial contact process** |  |  |
| **Room**   * **Space** * **Arrangement** * **Location** * **other** |  |  |
| **Questions**   * **process of asking** * **types of questions** |  |  |
| **Thank you**   * **What we did** |  |  |
| **Other** |  |  |